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SOURCE Stiinta si Tehnica Pentru Tineret.

GEOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES OF RUMANIAN MOLDAVIA

The following article, from Stiinta si Tehnica Pentru Tineret,
discusses the topography, climate, and natural resources of Suceava,
Bacau, Iasi, and Barlad, the regiunes in northeastern Rumania which
make up Moldavia.

A computation based on population figures and percentages for Moldavia in the article gives a figure of approximately 17,250,000 for the population of Rumania as a whole.⁷

I. Velcea

The topography of Moldavia can be divided into four types of relief features from west to east. These are the Subcarpathian peaks reaching an altitude of 1,200 to 1,300 meters, Subcarpathian hills, eroded hills and plateaus, and, to the east, fields and plains. These relief features are delimited by altitude and geological formations.

The Eastern Carpathians, located largely in Moldavia, are in general lower than the Central Carpathians. This is due to the geologic composition of the area. Except for the volcanic range to the west, the mountains are divided into two parallel ranges. The first is formed of hard crystalline rock under very old sedimentary rock. Toward the south the crystalline range narrows steadily until it disappears entirely in the Valea-Trotusului. These mountains toward the south are massive with rounded summits and covered with alpine turf. The latter range is rich in mineral deposits. Old sedimentary formations are well represented by the Giumalau, Tulghes, and Haghimas mountains. They have an especially picturesque appearance with overhanging cliffs, precipitous precipices, grottoes, and the gorges of the Bistrita, Barnareul, Barnarul, and Bicazul rivers. The second range includes the Stanisoarei, Ceahlau, Tarcau, Ciuc, Oituz, and Vrancei mountains, which are formed of newer, softer sedimentary rock offering less resistance to erosion by water. Consequently they are lower and less imposing. These mountains are in parallel ranges. They are covered with conifers. Because of their parallel position there are no roads to permit easy travel in this area.

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The Subcarpathians are composed mostly of new rock. They contain coal, and recently discovered petroleum deposits. These materials will permit power development and increased industrialization of Moldavia. Between the Subcarpathians and the main range there are a series of depressions from the Moldova Valley to the Vrancea Mountain. These depressions permit travel and offer favorable conditions for human habitation.

The entire area of Moldavia which lies between the Prut and the Subcarpathians is occupied by the Moldavian plateau, except for a small area to the south. This plateau is 300 to 400 meters lower than the Subcarpathians. It was formed some time in the past by a lake which eventually drained off to the south.

Northwestern Moldavia, consisting of the Suceava plateau, has a cooler climate, under the Baltic influence. It is not as favorable for agriculture as the area to the east, the Moldavian lowland, or the Jijia depression. This eastern part of the plateau, characterized by rapid drainage, has a pronounced watershed along the Dorohoi-Botosani-Targu Frumos line. The rocky clay soil does not permit the water to penetrate. However, this permits the building of mill races and canals.

Toward the south extend the Central Moldavian Plateau and the Barlad hills, separated by the Barlad and its tributaries. The north-south direction of flow makes east-west travel difficult. East of the Barlad and the Siret, the Covur plain falls away to the Siret lowlands.

The eastern part of Rumania has a continental climate extending from the Ukraine. In the winter, air masses from the east bring the temperature down to minus 32 degrees centigrade. In the summer, temperatures rise to 42 degrees. The lack of a natural barrier against eastern climate causes this area to have more severe winters than other parts of Rumania. In the summer, the dry east winds increase the aridness of Moldavia. In northern Moldavia the Baltic influence is felt and winters are long, the summers cool and humid. Cloudiness is more frequent and rain totals 700 to 900 millimeters. Hilly and plateau land enjoy a more moderate climate. In Subcarpathian depressions, fogs occur most often in the fall and late spring because of temperature inversions. Consequently, fruit production is often low there. Mountains 1,800 meters high have Alpine climate with a mean annual temperature of zero. Precipitation in summer is so great that the mean annual precipitation reaches 1,000 millimeters. Below 1,800 meters on the slopes of the mountains, there is a sub-Alpine climate and coniferous trees. At this altitude mountain breezes blow morning and evening. In the evening, winds descending from the mountains bring the smell of resin to the valleys. The potential power resulting from the great precipitation at these levels is now beginning to be used for the production of electricity.

The Siret and Prut systems represent a high electricity potential. The Siret collects the waters of the Suceava, Moldova, Bistrita, Trotus, Sustia, and Putna rivers, as well as those of the Barlad, which flows from the Moldavian plateau. In the mountains these rivers flow through forested gorges. In the flat regions, where slopes are very gentle, waters are full of silt. The Prut, fed by the Baseul, Jijia, and Bahluiul rivers, often floods its banks.

The Moldavian hills were formerly covered by forests, but these have disappeared as a result of overexploitation. At present, they are being reforested according to advanced Soviet methods.

This region was not developed industrially by the previous regime. However, the present regime plans a ball-bearing factory, new oil wells and refineries, etc. The Moinești oil field has been developed and a large steel center will be set up.

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In addition to important petroleum reserves, Moldavia has large deposits of brown coal in the Comanesti basin at Comanesti, Darmanesti, and Asau. Manganese, used to produce special steel, is exploited in Suceava Regiune at Iacoveni, Vatra-Dornei, Sarul-Dornei, etc.

Electric power plants along the right tributaries of the Siret could produce great quantities of power. Dams are also expected to permit irrigation of 300,000 hectares in southern Moldavia and northern Baragan, to permit navigation on the Siret between Galati and Bacau, to prevent floods on the Bistrita, and to permit the use of present flood areas for agriculture.

Moldavia has raw materials to supply forestry industries, construction enterprises, textile, hide, and food industries. Forests were overexploited in the past. Now, however, forestry combines such as those at Vatra-Dornei and Vaduri cut trees systematically. The textile industry formerly depended on imported semimanufactured fiber, but now combines such as those in Iasi and Botosani do the work domestically.

The majority of the inhabitants of Moldavia are Rumanians. The national minorities in Moldavia total 6.6 percent and include Jews, Hungarians, and Ukrainians, living mostly in cities of central and northern Moldavia. This region has 17.4 percent of the population of the country. The rural population is 79.9 percent of the total in the region. The urban population of the region constitutes 20.1 percent, or 600,000 persons located in 20 cities.

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